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EDITORIAL

The questions of why the sufferings in the world, why do bad things happen to good people, why is evil in a world created by a good God are perennial questions. Globally, the problems people are passing through seem to be a thorn in the flesh of men, many have thought of giving up. It is no longer news that deaths recorded globally are on the increase since the year 2020. Many parts of the world suffered much and are still suffering from the effects of the pandemic.

In Nigeria, the COVID-19 has increased the sufferings of people. People are yet to recover from the shock, prices of goods in the market increased threefold of what they were previously got in the markets, even keep increasing daily. Many people have nothing doing and people are being murdered on daily bases. These keep people wondering if there is still hope for the common man. Truly, people are suffering. Could it be that humanity has been cursed especially in this part of the world? Sometimes, suffering is regarded as punishment by many, whereas, some others conceive it to be a prelude to victory. It seems to be attached to the nature of man, but he makes frantic efforts to alienate himself from severe sufferings. One of the virtues man holds unto while suffering is hope, in the sense that he anticipates without knowing what the future has in stock for him. However, St. Paul holds: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us... for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God... for in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (cf. Romans 8:18, 20-21, 24-25).

In attempting to address the current situation of things globally, especially in our Nigerian society where people suffer more ranging from the fear of diseases and death to nepotism, hunger, bad governance, lack of job opportunities and excessive increase in the price of commodities which submerged many to suffering and hoping that things will get better, the Bigard Theological Studies (BTS) in Vol. 42 No. 1 edition of her journal hinges on **Suffering and Hope**. We wish to let the world know that suffering is not necessarily a sign of doom. God is found where people are suffering, where people are dying, where

people are almost despairing. He is there to supply courage, strength and hope while waiting patiently for the time of restoration of joy and happiness. Let us not grow weary in suffering, bearing Christ in mind, who saved humanity through suffering.

In our theological and philosophical investigations into the exigencies of suffering and hope, Fr. Hilary in his article **Suffering and Hope**, began by letting us know that suffering came as punishment for sins through our first parents Adam and Eve, but God in His infinite love and mercy gave humanity hope of redemption through one of their progenies. He also made us know that enduring suffering with hope reduces stress, increases our happiness and improves the quality of life.

Fr. Emmanuel Anagwo as an ecclesiastical mouth-piece in his article **Adopting New Ways of Celebrating the Word of God in a Pandemic Era**, advises us not to shut ourselves away from the Word of God in the midst of our sufferings, rather we should always open-up to the Word of God which gives us hope amidst our sufferings, through imbibing on various means which the Church presents to us in keeping constant touch with the Word of God which reassures hope and gives us life.

Man cannot survive on earth if he operates on the level of 'I alone'. He needs to learn from his environment. Fr. Kingsley Anagolu buttresses this point in his **Inauguration Lecture for 2021/2022 Academic and Formation Year** of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu made it clear that Learning or Education is an encounter man has with his environment in which he encounters God, Time and other human beings and with his own very self. He operates on 'I and Thou' relationship according to Martin Buber. This makes him grow to full maturity and self-discovery, as such, be able to endure sufferings, hoping for a better future.

Fr. Damian Udechukwu in his article **The Catholic Church and the Use of Images** clarifies us on the original command given to the Israelites by God concerning worship of images. God is not so to say, against the making and use of images in worships, rather he abhors worshipping those images, for he gave them instructions to make images in various scriptural instances shown in this article. The Catholic Church also does not worship images found in our church buildings, homes and working places. The images are meant to allow us focus on the invisible Being (God) we are conversing with. We honour the Saints through their images, we do not worship them.

Though we may be passing through crucibles of life, we should also bear in mind that some of these hard experiences shape us into what we are to be. Constantine Okoli in his **Book Review** on the *Short Life of Bishop Shanahan, C.S.Sp.* points out the various environmental challenges Bishop Shanahan experienced in his father land, Ireland, but those difficulties did not force or convince him to give up his life dreams. He braced up and continued until he attained his dreams. That was why he was able to survive his missionary challenges in Nigeria and became a great man the Church in Southern part of Nigeria will never forget in the annals of history. This is a reminder to all who suffer today, to do it with hope and never despair.

It is required of us to be strong in whatever situation we find ourselves in. Each of us is destined to bear a cross which we should carry while making our life journey. In the same vein, we ought to know that inasmuch as each is destined to a cross of life, no one was given the special function of constructing crosses for others to carry. Let us be true witnesses to authentic Christian living.



Clement Obasi

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BTS AIMS

As an academic journal, the aims of BTS are to serve as a medium of scientific reflection on theological and related issues and especially to dialogue constructively with African Traditional Religion and Culture in order to draw attention to values that are authentically human.

GUIDELINES

- Articles should be typed in Times New Roman, font 12, double-spacing with footnotes and full references given.
- Articles should not exceed 7,000 words (and a maximum of 20 pages).
- Articles should be accompanied by an abstract of about 200 words.
- Interested contributors are advised to contact the editor for more information.
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